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UNCLAS RANGOON 001264

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SENSITIVE

STATE ALSO FOR EAP/BCLTV
COMMERCE FOR ITA JEAN KELLY
TREASURY FOR OASIA JEFF NEIL
USPACOM FOR FPA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [BM](#)

SUBJECT: SECOND NATIONAL CONVENTION COMMITTEE
"RECONSTITUTED"

REF: A. RANGOON 1259

[1](#)B. RANGOON 1093

[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary: By reviving a second defunct National Convention planning committee, and staffing it with government officials, the Burmese regime is moving nearer to realizing step one of its seven part democracy plan. Participation of ethnic minority, and other opposition groups, is still nowhere in evidence. Packing these committees with rubber stampers, and refusing to discuss modalities of a constitutional convention with any outsiders, may expedite the "successful" re-convening of the National Convention. However, the farther down the road the GOB goes without any buy-in from the opposition, the less chance of the SPDC democracy road map leading to any meaningful political change. End summary.

SPDC Gives Itself a Push

[1](#)2. (U) Burma's ruling State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) announced on October 2nd that it would "reconstitute" the National Convention Convening Work Committee (NCCWC) as part of its 7-step "road map" to democracy. The first of these steps is the re-convening of the National Convention, which was suspended in 1996. The Committee's been staffed with 35 members, including three active duty military and three ex-military, and a member of the Union Solidarity Development Association Central Executive Committee. There were no members of ethnic or other opposition groups named to the Committee. The NCCWC will be chaired by U Aung Toe, the country's chief justice.

[1](#)3. (U) The NCCWC was first formed in 1992, but has been defunct since the National Convention was suspended in 1996. The purpose of the Committee is to offer administrative support to National Convention delegates -- such as arranging transportation and publishing services.

[1](#)4. (U) The reformation of the NCCWC comes on the heels of the regime's naming of 18 members to the National Convention Convening Commission (NCCC) -- the body responsible for organizing and ultimately re-convening the National Convention (see Ref B). Like the nominees to the NCCWC, the initial members of the reinvigorated Convening Commission are all affiliated with the regime -- the Chairman is SPDC Secretary-2, Lt. General Thein Sein. However, the NCCWC

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members, with a few exceptions, are at first blush not political hardliners, but senior civil servants in various logistical, information, and technical fields.

Comment: Where's the Opposition?

[1](#)5. (SBU) It is discouraging to see the regime steadily march toward achieving step one of its democratization plan without including of any ethnic or other opposition group members. Though this strategy of exclusion may speed up "progress," it will scuttle any chance that it might lead to some genuine democratic reform. As reported in Ref A, the major lesson from UN Special Envoy's recent visit was that the SPDC's road map could work, but only if both the government and opposition participated freely and equally in all stages. Unfortunately, Razali felt that the senior SPDC leadership had no immediate intention to allow this. The SPDC's subsequent naming of a second all-GOB National Convention body offers some concrete proof that his assessment is correct.
Martinez